



CHINESE CREATION MYTH

Prof Yanxia Zhao

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READING: CHINA'S CREATION AND ORIGIN MYTHS
EDITED BY MINEKE SCHIPPER, SHUXIAN YE, AND HUBIN YIN

❖ Yang Lihui and An Deming, The World Of Chinese Mythology: An Introduction,

https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9789004214804/Bej.9789004194854.i-354_003.xml

❖ Jung Jaeseo, 'Myths Of Giant Corpse Transformation', in *China's Creation and Origin Myths*, <https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004194854.i-354.37>

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF CHINESE CREATION MYTH

- ❖ Lu Xun: Daoism is the root of Chinese culture.
- ❖ Special Character of Daoism: Nature Centred, Female emphasized, homology/consanguinity of myriad things.
- ❖ **Chinese Creation myth under the influence of Daoism:**
 - ❖ Nature Centred Creation Myth: Pangu open the Sky and Earth
 - ❖ Unification of humans and Nature: the world as the result of transformation of Pangu
 - ❖ Female focused Creation Myth: Nuwa creates humankind

DAOIST COSMOGENESIS THEORY

- ❖ 老子《道德经》chap. 42 of *Daode Jing*: 道生一，一生二，二生三，三生万物 (Dao gave birth to the One, One to Two, Two to Three, Three to Myriad things).
- ❖ Dao (道=无极 unseparated Chaotic Void) gave birth to the One (One = Qi 气/炁 = Taiji/Taichi 太极),
- ❖ The One gave birth to the Two (Yin-yang 阴阳=heaven-earth 天地=male-female 男女=清浊),
- ❖ The Two gave birth to the Three (天地人, 天地气, 形/精气神), and the Three gave birth to the Myriad things.

1. CREATION MYTHS: PANGU CUT OFF THE HEAVEN AND EARTH

❖ 天地浑沌如鸡子，盘古生其中。万八千岁，天地开辟，阳清为天，阴浊为地。盘古在其中，一日九变，神于天，圣于地。天日高一丈，地日厚一丈，盘古日长一丈，如此万八千岁。天数极高，地数极深，盘古极长，后乃有三皇。数起于一，立于三，成于五，盛于七，处于九，故天去地九万里。（三国·吴·徐整《三五历纪》）

❖ The chaotic heaven and earth is like a chicken egg, Pangu was born from within. After Eight thousand years, heaven and earth was separated from each other where the Yang and clarity one turn into heaven and the turbid Yin became the earth. Pangu changed nine times in a day, from within and became the spirit of heaven and the sage of earth. Heaven was growing its height up to 1 zhang (=3 and 1/3 metres) per day, last such a growing speed for 18000years. Same speed did earth add its thick and Pangu grow his body height. After 18000years'growing, heaven had got its extremely height, earth got its extremely deepness and Pangu his extremely long body. After Pangu, the Three August ones appeared. Since the number is started from 1 and set itself up at 3 and established itself at 5, and flourished at 7 but stayed at 9, this is why the distance between heaven and earth is 90,000 li (90000x500 meters).

❖ Quoted from Xu Zheng (Wu State of the Three Kingdom): *Three Five historical Epoch*

天地混沌如鸡子，盘古生其中 THE CHAOTIC HEAVEN AND EARTH
IS LIKE A CHICKEN EGG, PANGU WAS BORN FROM WITHIN

❖ **Daoist interpretation of the Text:**

- ❖ 1. Before heaven and earth was separated, Dao道 existed as a formless (none-being) chaotic void where Pangu as the first formed being (the One) was generated because the creative power from within (De德). De is an inner power of Dao which can transform itself from formless nonebeing into being.
- ❖ 2. The nature of Dao was then obtained 得 by the formed being Pangu in the process of from formless/none-being into to formed being through De德.
- ❖ 3. Dao-de道德 (morality) should be equal to de-dao得道 (to obtain the Dao), the obtained nature of being therefore is actually the manifestation of Dao; since Dao is equal to the ultimate good and therefore, the innate nature of being is also good. This is the reason why Pangu could become the spirit/god of heaven and sage of earth.

万八千岁，天地开辟，阳清为天，阴浊为地。

❖ After heaven and earth was cut apart from each other from one chaotic oneness, it turned into two separate parts to opposite each others with opposite features: the yang and clarity one was named as heaven while the yin and turbid was named as earth.

❖ **Daoist interpretation:** 1. The whole universe was come from one formless chaotic sources. 2. The process of universe forming was through a long period of time. 3. The creation was started from the separation of two opposite forces: Yin and Yang

❖ Note: 9 is the highest number in Chinese culture. 18000years = double of thousands of 9= unaccountable times

盘古在其中，一日九变，神于天，圣于地。天日高一丈，地日厚一丈，盘古日长一丈，如此万八千岁

❖ Pangu as the third being between the two (heaven and earth) is very important, as it is him to become the soul or spirit of the heaven and the sage of the earth.

❖ **Please pay attention to the number:** Pangu made changes 9 times per day and the continue growing was lasting for 18000 (2000 x 9) years.

❖ Another important concept is 'bian' 变

❖ 变 = yi 易 = change = creating power

it was change made the creation process happened



天数极高，地数极深，盘古极长，后乃有三皇。

- ❖ Daoist three gifted ones: heaven, earth and people
- ❖ Three August ones: Fuxi, Red Emperor/Divine Farmer, Yellow Emperor
- ❖ Fuxi who created the magic number and eight trigrams:

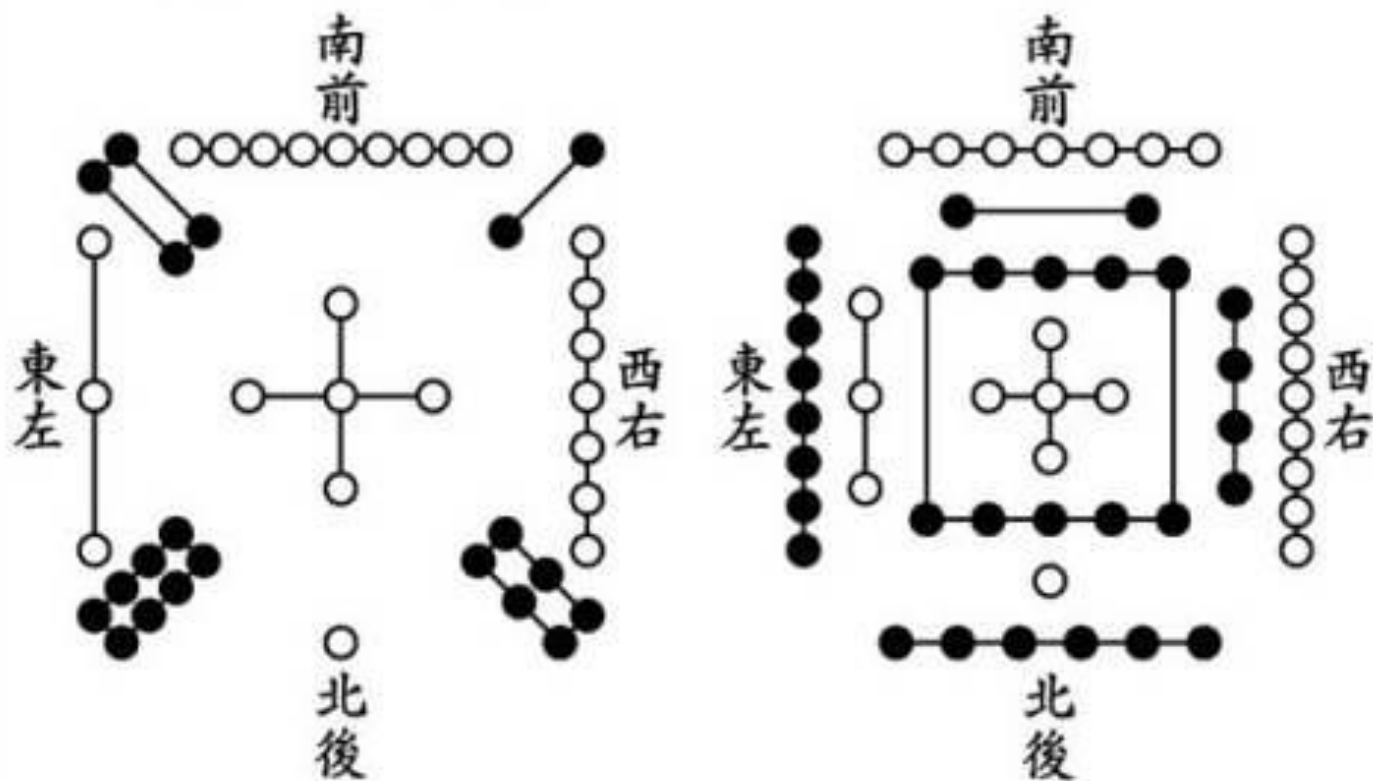


伏羲八卦 (先天八卦)



数起于一，立于三，成于五，盛于七，处于九，故天去地九万里
WHY 1,3,5,7,9 ARE MORE IMPORTANT?

河圖洛書



PANGU AND THE MYRIAD THINGS IN THE UNIVERSE

❖ Ren fang(任昉) of Southern Dynasty in his book *Recording of the strange* 《述异记》 claimed that Pangu's body transformed into things of the universe.

❖ Dong Sizhang董斯张of the Ming Dynasty quoted words from *Chronicle Recording of the Operation of the Five Phases* 《五运历年纪》 in his book 《广博物志》 like this: “盘古之君，龙首蛇身，嘘为风雨，吹为雷电，开目为昼，闭目为夜。死后骨节为山林，体为江海，血为淮渚，毛发为草木”。

❖ The Gentleman Pangu, had a dragon head and snake body, who could breath out his breath as wind and rain and blow his wind as thunder and lighting, it was day-time when he opened his eyes and night-time when closed his eyes. His bones and joint became mountains and forest, his body turned into seas and big rivers, and blood small rivers, hairs and furs grass and wood.

PANGU HIMSELF BECAME PART OF THE UNIVERSITY

- ❖ The earliest Chinese mythologies contain many stories of the wondrous rulers of ancient times, but there are no creation stories. The story of Panku (aka Pangu) is probably the closest Chinese version of a creation myth.
- ❖ However, the creation story of Pangu is typical Taoist version creation. Not only because he came out of the cosmic egg but also because he had also used his body to shape the universe to allow all things on earth came out of one source.

氏 古 盤



NÜWA 女娲 / WĀ HUÁNG 娲皇 CREATING HUMAN BEING 造人

❖ The story of Nüwa creating humankind 《女娲造人》 is recorded by Ying Shao (应劭) of the East Han Dynasty in his book *Custom Expert* 《风俗通》 or *Romance of Custom* 《风俗演义》:

❖ 俗说开天辟地，未有人民，女娲搏黄土做人。剧务，力不暇供，乃引绳于泥中，举以为人。故富贵者，黄土人，贫贱者，引绳人也。

❖ According to the folk tales, when heaven and earth was created, there were no humankind existed.

❖ Nüwa used her own hands created humankind through loess (yellow earth). Since the task of creation was so huge that she could not completed the task by merely using her own hands, she then soaked a rope into mud and waved muddy rope in the air. The spots of mud dropped down to earth became humans.

❖ According to the saying, humankind made through her own hands became the wealth and honourable ones; while the humans created by the dropped mud drop from her waved rope became people who were lower standard.



TWO ASPECTS OF NÜWA STORY IN THE EARLIES CHINESE LITERATURE

❖ The earliest literary reference to Nuwa, in Liezi (列子) by Lie Yukou (列御寇, 475 - 221 B.C.E.), describes

1. **Nüwa repairing the heavens after a great flood,**

and states that

2. **Nüwa molded the first people out of clay.**

NUWA (AKA NUGUA), THE GODDESS OF HUMANKIND, IS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR CHARACTERS IN ANCIENT CHINESE MYTHOLOGY. ACCORDING TO MYTHOLOGY, NUWA CREATED MANKIND AND REPAIRED THE PILLAR OF HEAVEN AND THE BROKEN CORNERS OF EARTH WHICH GONG GONG HAD DESTROYED IN A FIT OF ANGER.





STORY OF NÜWA REPAIR THE HEAVEN IN *THE HISTORY RECORDING* 史记

- ❖ Guideway for Great Desolate West大荒西经 of the : Guideway through Mountains and Seas/ Of Ancient Mountains and Seas 《山海经》 mentioned the god of Godness Nuwa, Guo Pu郭璞of the Eastern Jin东晋made his commentary like this: “ 女娲，古神女而帝者，人面蛇身，一日中七十变，其腹化为此神。” ’Nuwa, An Ancient Goddness who became an Emperor, she had a human face and a snake body, and has 70 changes within one day and her belly transformed into that God.’
- ❖ 山海经; The Guideway of the West Mountian of the *Guideway through mountains and Seas* 山海经·西山经 recorded the battle between water god Gonggong共工 and Fire Gao hurong at Buzhou mountain 不周山.
- ❖ According to the Supplement of the Three Augusts Origin Time of *the Recording of History* 《史记·补三皇本纪》 by Sima Qian of Western Han Dynasty: Water God Gonggong共工rebelled and the God of Fire Zhurong had a battle with him and defeated him. Gonggong got very angry and used his head to heat the Buzhou Mountain which is the supporting pillar of the universe and caused the collapse of the heaven and the water of the heaven river poured down to human world. Nüwa could not bear humans to encounter such a disaster and Nüwa melting down the five-colored stones to mend the Heavens. To use the feet of divine turtles to support the four ends of the world, to ease the flood and kill the fierce animals and therefore to allow humans have a peaceful living world.

MEANINGS BEHIND THE NUWA MYTH

- ❖ Daoist influence of this Creation Myth of Nuwa:
- ❖ **Female Focused.** Daoist Philosophy treasure the attributions of female: soft, weak, compassion, yielding, supporting, altruism and to take water as something the most close to the Dao.
- ❖ **Protection, Love, care and sacrifice as the main features of the human creator:** no intension of control, not focus on punishment, only supporting, love and sacrifice : water-like Daoist leadership/government

THE DROPPED DOWN POSITION OF NUWA IN LATER CHINESE MYTH AND LEGENDS

- ❖ By the Han Dynasty (206 – 220 C.E.), Nuwa was described in literature with her husband Fuxi as the first of the Three August Ones and Five Emperors, and they were often called the "parents of humankind."
- ❖ Paintings depicting them joined as half people, half snake or dragon, date as far back as the Warring States period (fifth century B.C.E. to 220 B.C.E.).
- ❖ In the earliest Chinese dictionary, *Shuowen Jiezi* (說文解字), by Xu Shen (58 - 147 C.E.), Nüwa is said to have been both the sister and the wife of Fuxi. A stone tablet from the Han dynasty, dated 160 C.E., depicts Fu Hsi with Nüwa, who was both his wife and his sister

